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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

FEBRUARY 27, 1981

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The state of sociology

By Anthony Giddens

ANTHONY HEATH:
Social Mobility.
303pp.
0 00 635601 X

RAYMOND WILLIAMS:
Culture.
284pp.
0 00 635627 3

GRAEME SALAMAN:
Class and Corporation.
284pp.
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Fontaine Paperbacks. £2.50 each.

Sociology was the whizz-kid subject of the 1960s. In the period following the creation of the new universities in this country, and at a time of the general expansion of higher education, sociology seemed at last to have found a respectable place in the academy. Most universities (Cambridge and Oxford being notable exceptions) acquired sociology departments, and those departments attracted large blocks of students. But while succumbing to popular demand, many of those in the more traditionally established subjects remained hostile to what they regarded as an endeavour largely empty of intellectual content, a mere ally of the comfortable middle class. Such suspicions were hardly allayed when sociology became the centre of rebellious youth movements both here and abroad: movements that today have for the most part faded into rapid oblivion.

The subject has emerged from all this with a curiously mixed reputation—although neither element of the mixture is particularly flattering to those who would call themselves 'sociologists'. On the one hand, sociology is still seen by some as a weakly elaborated intellectual endeavour associated with vibrant political rhetoric. The *History Man* view of sociology, one might call it. Even though they may have only the vaguest of notions about the topics studied in sociology, proponents of this view see sociology as the seducer of an otherwise intelligent student population. Sociology means subversion, the shrill demands of unskilled student militancy. On the other hand, what seems to be quite a contrary view of the subject is often maintained

perhaps more commonly than the first by those who have had some first-hand acquaintance with it in schools and universities. This is in fact that sociology is a rather dull and uninspiring grind through a range of theories and research methodologies, which, far from propelling its students towards the barricades, is more likely to bore them to death with platitudes. Sociology, in this second view, is apt to purvey banalities under the heading of new discoveries.

One thing these views share is a deprecating opinion of the intellectual attainments of sociology, whether sociologists are seen as an execrable band of strutting Howard Kirks or a faceless company able to bore anyone to death with statistics. Sociology, it would appear, has yet to attain the comfortable niche in the academic world enjoyed by other subjects—even those which by any token must be ranked as very close to their concerns, such as politics. Moreover, it has lost a good deal of its popularity among students compared with ten years ago; many sociology departments are today as hard put to attract a full complement of students as they once were to fend off eager applicants.

On the face of it, this situation would appear to vindicate one or other of the derogatory assessments of sociology just mentioned. But to reach such a conclusion, I think, would be as specious as those assessments themselves. For in the 1960s sociology was far from being the collection of revolutionary doctrines that many have supposed. Moreover it would be quite mistaken to see the relative decline in the numbers of students in sociology departments as expressing a lack of progress in the subject itself. Ten to fifteen years ago, sociology in this country, as elsewhere, was characteristically dominated by a rather complacent conception that human social institutions can be analysed by methods parallel to those employed in the natural sciences; and that social research in this respect of its practical implications. The student revolutionaries may quite often have been sociology students, but where this was the case they specifically set out to attack these sorts of ideas—the very ideas that tend to underlie the second attitude to the sub-

ject that I have mentioned, because sociology appears there as a pale, ineffective copy of natural science. The notion that sociology should be directly modelled on natural science used to be something of an orthodoxy, and was typically associated with a cosy, ethnocentric vision of an increasingly abundant future to be brought about through the progressive spread of industrialism.

These orthodox ideas not only proved quite unable to cope with the turmoil of the late 1960s, they encapsulated a conception of sociology whose shallowness has become more and more apparent in the years that have followed. The result has been to set in train a series of transformations in sociological thought. First of all, there has been a new flowering of social theory, generating a range of novel theoretical standpoints. I say 'social theory' rather than 'sociological theory' because it has become clear that all the social sciences—including sociology, politics, anthropology, economics, human geography and history—share a common number of basic conceptual concerns. These are to do with how human action should be interpreted or explained, the relation between individual activities and the long-term development of social institutions, and so on. Second, partly as a result of developments in social theory, there has been an increasing and fruitful methodological merging between sociology and the other social sciences. If fewer students specialise in the study of 'sociology' then used to be the case, a much greater number now encounter sociological methods and research in other contexts. Particularly important in this respect—although inevitably controversial—is the intrusion of sociological methods into the work of historians.

Respectable or not, sociology today is at the centre of a range of advances of major importance, and it is evidently the purpose of the *Fontaine New Sociology* series to offer a forum in which these can be discussed and made available to a broad reading public. Anthony Heath's *Social Mobility*, Graeme Salaman's *Class and Corporation*, and Raymond Williams's *Culture* are the first books to appear in what is clearly an ambitious and

edited by Gavin Mackenzie. As Mackenzie points out in his preface to the books, the conventionally recognized boundaries between the social sciences mean much less now than they used to do. The contributions to the series are designed, he says, to acknowledge that 'sociological explanation' incorporates historical explanation; and that 'social' institutions cannot be examined in isolation from economic or 'political' ones. It is a sign of the times that one of the three first titles in the series is written by Raymond Williams, who seeks to outline a sociology of culture.

Anthony Heath's *Social Mobility* is concentrated mainly upon Britain, drawing in substantial degree upon the research carried out by the Oxford Social Mobility Group, but it does also incorporate a range of informative international comparisons and some interesting general reflections on the nature of inequality. The significance of social mobility as an index of inequality, and as a feature of class division, Heath indicates, has been much debated in political theory and in sociology. Social mobility is not given any particular attention in Marx's writings, and come contemporary Marxist authors have been inclined to dismiss the topic as irrelevant to class analysis. For class divisions, they may have a fairly quite independent of the individuals who happen to move between particular class positions. Heath rejects this standpoint; divergent rates of social mobility, he asserts, are likely to have far-reaching consequences for class formation and class consciousness. The bulk of his book is concerned with posing, and tracing out the implications of the answers to, three main questions. Is Britain today a more 'open' society than it has been in the past? What are the main influences that effect patterns of mobility, and are these similar in all industrialized countries? And does social mobility help undermine pre-existing class differences?

Unlog the Oxford Group's data, Heath argues that there is a considerable amount of mobility between the generations in post-war Britain; there is more upward than downward mobility, since there has occurred a relative expansion of professional and managerial jobs as compared to manual work. Heath displays a healthy scepticism about any interpretation that would endeavour to formalize such conclusions too precisely. For how much mobility there is depends upon how the lines are drawn between different occupations or different classes. This also leads him to be cautious in assessing how far there is a greater spread of mobility in Britain today than in previous decades; certainly there is no simple trend towards an increasing 'openness' at all levels of the class structure. One of the useful aspects of Heath's book, as compared to most of the literature on social mobility, is that it is not wholly concerned with mobility of women. Heath claims, takes two forms. Considered in terms of marriage, and thus assessed in respect of their husband's class position, women are somewhat more mobile than men. But if we look at women's employment, female labour is highly concentrated in lower white-collar employment, in jobs with few prospects of advancement. 'Class discrimination', Heath concludes, 'divides men, but sexual discrimination brings women together'.

Heath offers a concise but illuminating discussion of international comparisons between mobility rates. Again a good dose of scepticism is necessary. Analysis of mobility figures might seem, on the face of things, to offer considerable accuracy in comparing inequality of opportunity in different societies. In fact, one encounters here a veritable minefield of traps for the unwary. Picking his way gingerly through, the author is able to demonstrate that there do seem to be substantial variations internationally both in rates and forms of mobility. The book ends with a nibble at the third question, the relation between mobility and class divisions. I did not find this as carefully argued as the rest of the book, and hence a bit disappointing. All in all, though, this is a good book, sensible and illuminating; I cannot think of a better introduction than anyone could look to who wants to begin reading in this area of sociology.

A high standard is also maintained in Salaman's *Class and the Corporation*, which dovetails neatly with Heath's study. Salaman's book is aimed at complementary problems

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Cambridge Geographical Studies 13



... ..

convergence of work on "litera-
tura", the "media", and "com-
munications", the implications of
which need to be drawn out and sys-

Sociological Theory and Research: A Critical Approach edited by Hubert M. Blalock, Jr (448pp, The Free Press; Collier-Macmillan, £15.50, 0-02-903630-5) contains thirty essays selected from papers delivered at the 1979 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association. The book concentrates on issues in the field and topics discussed include "Has Deviance a Future?" and "Where are the Streeters Now?"

Wagner loomed up at the bat-
tleship, and I could not remem-
ber what Warner had said about
his flaw. I walked out of the bat-
tle to confer with the catcher.
"What's his 'groove', Jack?"
I asked him.

figura strutting before it. That book's major contribution is the porroch of Martin's maternal lineage. He says of his mother's mother: "If you said something she didn't like she'd grab you by this hand and start blikin' you." He tells how his mother kicked his father out of the house when she discovered he was pregnant because she discovered that her husband was whippin' en her wit

and many others; baseball is clean, well-lit place which keeps the terrors off.

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Second World

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we suspected. I walked round to M de Charlus's house. He had not yet returned. I left the letter. It was learned next day that the Princesse de Guermantes had poisoned herself by mistake on a medicine for another, an accident after which she was for several months at death's door and withdrew from society for several years. It sometimes happened to me also after that evening, on taking a bus, to pay my fare to the conductor who Julien had "introduced" to M de Charlus in the cab. He was a big man, with an ugly, pimpled face and a short, eighteenth-century wig. I now wear what François called "specimens". I could never look at him without thinking of the perturbation followed by amazement which the Princesse de Guermantes would have shown if I had had her with me and had said to her, "Wait a minute, I'm going to show you the person for whose sake M de Charlus resented your three appeals on the evening you poisoned yourself, the person responsible for all your misfortunes. You'll see him in a moment, he isn't far from here."

Doubtless the Princess's heart would have beaten wildly in anticipation. And her curiosity would perhaps have been mixed with a secret admiration for a person who had been so attractive as to make M de Charlus, as a rule so kind to her, deaf to her entreaties. How often, in her grief mingled with hatred and, in spite of everything, a certain fellow-feeling, must she not have attributed the most noble features to that person, whether she believed it to be a man or a woman! And then, on seeing this creature, ugly, pimpled, vulgar, with red-rimmed, myopic eyes, what a shock! Doubtless the cause of our sorrow, embodied in a human form beloved of another, is sometimes comprehensible to us; the Trojan elders, seeing Helen pass by, said to one another:

One glance from her eclipses all our griefs.

But the opposite is perhaps more common, because (just as, conversely, admirable and beautiful wives are always being abandoned by their husbands) it often happens

that people who are ugly in the eyes of almost everyone excite in others equally strong passions; for what is so unattractive, something in the mind. Moreover one cannot even say that the recollection of the Trojan elders is more or less common than the other (stupefaction on seeing the person who has caused our sorrows); for one has only to let a little time go by and the case of the Trojan elders recurs: always merges with the other; in other words there is only one case. Had the Trojan elders never seen Helen, and had she been fated to grow old and ugly, if one had said to them one day: "You're about to see this famous Helen," it is probable that, confronted with a dumpy, red-faced, misshapen old woman, they would have been no less stupefied than the Princesse de Guermantes would have been at the sight of the bus conductor.

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On the road to freedom

By Douglas Johnson

MARIUS PERRIN:
Avec Sartre au Stalg 12D
168pp. Paris: Delergé.
2 7113 0184 2

Marius Perrin is a priest, and a specialist in English studies who is now Director of the Ecole Supérieure de Sciences-Traductrices in the Catholic Faculty of Lyon. From June 1940 until March 1941 he was a French prisoner-of-war in the German camp of Trier. Among his fellow-prisoners there were the Dominican Boisselot, one of the principal animators of the *l'Esprit* and other Catholic publications considered somewhat daring at the time, Pierre Boileau, who had written a successful detective novel called *Le Repos du Bocheur*, and a writer and philosophy teacher, Jean-Paul Sartre.

Boisselot appears to have met Sartre before the war, with Gabriel Marcel, and Sartre already knew of Boileau's reputation as a writer. Perrin had only a vague memory of having read a short story by him (it was "Le Mur") as well as a critical article on Mauriac, but it was his who formed the strongest relationship with Sartre. When he eventually escaped from the prison camp it was to Sartre's mother in Paris that he went first, and he and Sartre remained close friends after the war. This journal and notes, written during the period of their captivity, are now published as a homage to Sartre.

It is clear that Sartre made an indelible impression on Perrin. While others were proud to have Sartre eating at their table, Perrin was a normal and *agréable* de philosophie. (French snobbery does not seem to have been diluted by the experience of defeat and imprisonment.) Perrin was struck by the personality and ideas of his new friend. He tells us that he never forgot the lesson Sartre taught him, which he later expressed in the words, "L'important n'est pas ce qu'on a fait de vous, mais ce que vous faites de ce qu'on a fait de vous".

Perrin is also anxious to correct mistakes. He once wrote to the TLS, he tells us, to protest about the suggestion in a review that Sartre owed his release from the camp to the intervention of Drieu la Rochelle (a probability described as "instructive"). In reality it was Perrin who had the idea of describing Sartre on his papers as being "inapt" for military service. Perrin again who wrote out this medical decision in red ink (ironically, Sartre, equipped with this degree, was able to pass through the "old German controls" and return to France while others, with genuine military credentials, were sent back). Perrin is also anxious to nullify the legend that Sartre lectured on Hegel to a group of priests in the prison, a legend which is gaining credence for being so frequently repeated. (It is repeated, for example, in the special number of *l'Esprit* published after Sartre's death).

According to Perrin he had, on Sartre's advice, succeeded in getting

hold of a copy of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* through the agency of a Basque priest who went into Trier every day. Sartre—always "Monsieur Sartre" to Perrin, who in turn was always "Monsieur l'abbé" to Sartre; they were almost alone in avoiding the universal *tutoiement*—would spend an hour or two each day reading this book with Perrin, usually in the blanket store-room. Sartre commented on the text and would sometimes explain how he intended to develop some theme in a book he was planning to write.

Sartre also had the manuscript of *L'Age de raison* with him in the camp and several of the priests read it and discussed it among themselves. Their first real contact with him had been when Sartre gave a talk to a small group of prisoners on the theme of death, and how it was envisaged by Rilke, Malraux and Heidegger. The lecture was of great success in so far as the priests agreed that Sartre was "un homme à cultiver" and they invited him to lunch, a lunch specially prepared and spectacularly endowed with a bottle of Moelle wine (poured by the invaluable Basque priest). From this time on it would seem as if all the prisoners spent their time discussing Sartre, his experiences, his views and his projects. Was there a possibility that he might be converted? Why was he reluctant to kill the flies occasionally visible on his clothes—had he a Buddhist-like reluctance to destroy any form of life or was he determined to profit from this enforced captivity and find out what it was really like to be down and out, a *clochard*?

Sartre, in his turn, appears to have learnt from the priests. He was surprised to discover that in the seminary there was discussion about left-wing ideology and about the question of anti-Semitism. He had not sufficiently reflected on the idea that the Jewish religion, with its insistence on a unique God, was not a challenge to all other religions. When in argument with the priests, his answer to what Perrin called their "imperialisme théologique" was, in part, to insist upon his own pride, his "orgueil absolu".

But the key to this shared experience of the Stalg was the play *Bariona*, which Sartre wrote for the Christmas celebrations and in which he himself acted. For a long time he would not allow this work to be published although it seems that a typescript version had been circulating privately, possibly from one of the actors, because he regarded it as being so intimately addressed to the circumstances of that time and not properly to be understood as a work of art. The version that was eventually published was accompanied by a note in which Sartre explains that he took his subject from Christian mythology, not because he had undergone any changes during captivity, but because he had made an agreement with the priests that when his fellow-prisoners found a subject which would bring about Christmas Eve, the greatest unanimity between Christians and non-believers.

In the epilogue to his book, Perrin is inspired by this note to

The essence of independence

By Kenneth O. Morgan

DAVID SMITH (Editor):
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1780-1980
239pp. Pluto Press in association with Llafur. This Society for the Study of Welsh Labour History. £10. (paperback, £4.95). 0 86104 321 9

The Welsh present is bleak and full of foreboding. Burning cottages, threats of fasting unto death, civil disobedience, an economy being closed through a combination of misadventure and blind dogma, all testify to a nation in acute crisis. At least the Welsh past, however, is to much healthier condition. Indeed, for twenty-five years now there has been a dramatic upsurge of interest in the history of Wales, both among academic scholars and the general public. Monographs and learned journals flourish; the Board of Celtic Studies is a hive of unvoiced activity; the media are awash with popularized versions of the recent and remote Welsh past. Indeed, the renaissance in the study of Welsh history has been one of the most heartening features of the British intellectual scene for a generation or more.

The impressive upsurge is illustrated—and, indeed, taken further by A. Parry and a Proletariat, a fascinating volume of essays edited by David Smith. Although the product of the thriving Welsh Labour History Society, it ranges far beyond the confines of the work-class experience in examining aspects of Welsh history from the late eighteenth century onwards. It is, indeed, concerned with a "people" rather than a "proletariat" and all the better for that. If many of the themes and personnel have been treated before, we also hear about conservatives, coal-owners, Anglo-Catholics, even the occasional proto-fascist, all less familiar figures in the popular exercise that Welsh history is usually taken to be. This book of eleven essays, then, demonstrates the extraordinary fertility that has been shown, especially in research into the two centuries since the first impact of mass industrialization. The history of Wales in the recent past now has a new epology. No longer need it be seen in English terms, demarcated by a conquest in 1282 or an Act of Union in 1536, and coming to the contrary, the history of Wales in the new social forces of the twentieth century. This book goes far towards explaining much of the essence of Wales in this later period, and David Smith's analysis is a congratulatory note to the skill and industry with which he has brought the whole enterprise to fruition.

The team assembled here is a strong one. The book is opened by two established masters, Gwyn A. Williams and Iwan Gwynedd Jones: both are at the peak of their form. Gwyn Williams, in penetrating the "frontier years" of the Welsh working class between the 1780s and the 1840s, again traverses that convulsive world bordered by Madoc and the Merthyr rising that he has made very much his own. If many of his themes have appeared in his previous writings, the consciousness of his essay enables him to spell them out with new force. He depicts a Wales raw yet sophisticated, taught up in socio-economic terms from the flannel workers of rural Wales to the shipyard workers of the Val of Glamorgan, with new religious sentiments and industrial and political radicalism permeating throughout. By the late 1820s, a clear working-class conscience can be delineated, and a distinct Welsh culture has crystallized, albeit fleetingly, while frontier areas exploded into violent action, first the abortive "rising" of 1831, then the battle for unionism that spilled over into Chartistism. And yet, by the late 1840s, it was all gone, and working-class memories of the traumatic were soon to fade also. The impression is of the tragic, revolutionary passion of an impossible Wales, from which Gwyn Williams, from Gwynedd Jones, and Iwan Gwynedd Jones, in their respective ways, have measured well, yet it may be that the careful study of "language

and community" in mid-nineteenth century Wales is the most important contribution in the book. He shows clearly the vital role of the Welsh language in shaping the popular culture of the mid-Victorian years, above all in the cyclical growth of the nonconformist chapels. Welsh was the language of worship—and, by extension, of politics, public debate, and of moral and spiritual values as well. English, by contrast, was the language of infidelity and secularism, of extreme radicalism and of aristocratic heresy; it was the vessel of ethical corruption. But it was also the language of "getting on". Economic advance eroded this Welsh-language culture from above; in time, English socialism underpinned it. Yet Iwan Gwynedd Jones's sensitive inquiry shows how the native language remained central to Welsh values, with all their contradictions. An extension of his research into the years of mass popularisation from 1880 onwards (including the impact of state education) would be fruitful indeed.

Another senior historian, L. J. Williams, the leading authority on the Welsh coal industry, also provides a thoughtful contribution on a neglected topic, the role of the limited coal-owners in the late nineteenth century. This provision of capital, techniques of management, patterns of social mobility, forms of social and political control, are all examined. On the whole, his conclusion is a positive one, rightly emphasizing the constructive contribution made by the class to community life. And yet it is noticeable that his essay begins with a hint of apology for taking on such a subject. Were he able now to extend the story, to examine the coal-owners' quite appalling record during the years of depression after 1918, as well as the period of industrial growth before the war, his reasonable and charitable judgments might well be much modified.

These, then, are senior figures, masters of their craft. But an equally encouraging feature of the book is the presence of younger scholars, asking new questions, perhaps, but with a constant urgency. Brian Davies offers a powerful analysis of Dr Price of Llantrisant, usually thought of as a kind of mad anti-druid obsessed with cremation, but presented plausibly here as a radical critic of the ethos of late-Victorian empire. Peter Stead takes most intelligently with the language of politics in Edwardian Wales (really the industrial coalfield rather than the Lloyd George territory further north) between 1906 and 1910. He shows how the rhetoric of class changed in style and content, in the face of the social and economic tensions of the Tonypandy period. He is equally interesting on the public image of Kalf Hardie and (more surprisingly) of C. B. Stanton, that primitive realist who refused without trace from syndicalist militant to neo-fascist xenophobe.

Emlyn Sharrington breaks vital new ground in treating the impact of French right-wing Catholic writers, Barrès, Maurras and the rest, on conservative Anglo-Catholic circles in Wales before 1914 and on the early ideologues of Plaid Cymru after the war. This is a difficult theme and queries arise on points of detail. How influential the Anglo-Catholic really was, how direct the links were between pre-war and post-war nationalists, whether the latter were or were not somewhat atypical. In contrast, say to Ambrose Beah, another Catholic nationalist whose attachment to France led him to break with Plaid Cymru's nationalism in 1940) are questions that suggest themselves. But Sharrington deserves warm commendation for something of a break-through in the realm of the history of ideas and of cultural transmission. So, too, does Hywel Francis, who shows how oral history can be used with profit to gain new insights into the world of the Welsh miners. The analysis of class and social relations in Gwynedd shows the appetite for his forthcoming study of the North Wales Quarrymen's Union between 1874 and 1922.

Finally, the editor himself, David Smith, provides a most sparkling finale, written with Cobb-like brio, on "Wales through the looking glass", the relation between image and reality in Welsh life over the past hundred years. Smith has already written standard works on the Welsh Miners' Federation and the Welsh Rugby Union; both these highly important bodies appear here to hoister his arguments. His essay is really a series of questions, but they are questions of such originality and introspection that they will surely leave him and others going for years to come.

A few marginal criticisms of the book might be offered. At times an artificial attempt is made to introduce Marxist stereotypes into this quite inappropriate milieu. We are even given a singularly impenetrable quotation from the prophet himself, as a preliminary to discussing Lord Penrhyn's views on fox-hunting. But the book as a whole is impressively open-minded and free from ideological commitment. The two studies based on oral history might have indicated some of the hazards, as well as the rewards, of using this kind of material. In two essays, we are really offered a series of fragmentary notes rather than a coherent analysis. It is a pity, too, that there are so many printing errors, including an inaccurate table of contents.

But the virtues of the book far outweigh these small blemishes. Here is a work on British social history of much general interest. The overall effect is to present a picture of Wales radically different from that offered in the late 1950s, when the modern period of Welsh historiography began. This book is neither an anthology of clichés nor a bundle of sensations. Instead, it is a thoughtful and useful work, with predictable class divisions and political alignments, was era shown a pluralistic society shot through with sectional and local differences. Instead of an isolated stagnant backwater, another Africa waiting to be discovered and civilized by the late Victorians, we are shown a proud, vigorous popular nation, with its own traditions, values and institutions, quite distinct from those of the governing master race across the water. The "interior of Wales" is not a land of sheep and sheepfolds, but a land becoming inexorably more anglicised in the wake of mass industrialization and mass education, we are shown a place where a rooted sense of cultural and linguistic identity lives on as the chief of the determinants of the mid-twentieth century.

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BODLEY HEAD

commentary

After the tiger

By Christopher Wintle

Lulu
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

Few first performances of an opera in England can have been so elaborately heralded as *Lulu*, the second and last opera of Alban Berg, composed and all but completed in the 1930s. This work is based on the controversial plays by Frank Wedekind, *Erzsetzt* and *Büchse der Pandora*, dating from the turn of the century. Until recently, only two of its acts had ever been performed, the third having been suppressed at the instigation of Berg's widow. Following her death, however, the final act was assembled and completed by Friedrich Cerha and performed at the Paris Opera two years ago. This performance was subsequently televised and recorded, and was followed by others in Europe and America. Already there have been a great number of articles about the work—even in its truncated state—and the complete music has now been published.

All this means that the central issues have had a good airing: the interpretation of the libretto, the evolution of the elaborate formal structure, the description of the labyrinthine musical processes, the identification of the allusions and cross-references, as well as much speculation over the more biographical questions. As a result, a particular onus rests upon the producer—in this case Günter Friedrich—to realise effectively what is from many points of view, a difficult work. Not the least of the difficulties concerns what the piece is all about.

A number of strands run through it, each of which calls for special treatment. First, there is the figure of Lulu herself. According to Wedekind, she incarnates the "essence" of woman. She is this *Erzsetzt*, a mythic figure of uncertain origin, raised in, but not born of, society, an innocent who is carried, like Don Giovanni, from seduction to seduction, a Dionysian whose energy both vitalises and destroys. She has been taken out of her true milieu, the dance, and feels as a consequence like a "beast". At this level, the opera observes her in various guises of society, through which she rises and falls. This society is portrayed ostentatiously as masculine: a commercially orientated world that seeks to exploit Lulu's eroticism, but which avenges itself upon her as she destroys its members. It blackmails her, drives her into prostitution, and eventually murders her.

But there is also the more complex interaction between Lulu and those who are not simply society's ciphers (as are the Athlete or the Marquis), but who feel in her vitalising presence an inadequacy that calls for a special kind of dedication. Both Alwa (Berg's alter ego) and the formerly loving but intellectually lesbian, Countess Geschwitz, are transfixed and blinded by Lulu's sensuality, but are treated shamelessly by her and eventually pay for their dedication with their lives. Lulu herself, however, lives, and needs only the most powerful man, Dr Schön ("the tiger"), who has found her and brought her up and who understands and hence fears her most. She pursues him relentlessly, even commits him to marry her. When he discovers her infidelities, he still refuses to acknowledge her true nature, but demands that she abort herself. In him, she feels the only man who is a kind of ghost in the form of the Ripper, her love finds its fullest expression, before receiving its grim and tragic recognition in death.

Friedrich rises to the opera's challenges with a highly stylized production, in which he finds and expresses, through visual correlative, for most of the concepts. It is by no means an inappropriate way of interpreting Wedekind, whose drama (not without its own elements of surreal symbolism) foreshadowed the work of Brecht. In route, he achieves a series of splendid comic and dramatic, notably the interweaving of

Lulu at this opening to reveal a commercialized, 1930s-style image of woman: the intimates dance-of-death between Lulu and the Ripper that replaces the prescribed off-stage murder; and the final abandonment of Lulu at the footlights, exploited and spent. Indeed, he makes this most of the work's satiric features through the use of sets, costumes and movements.

In the role of Lulu, Karan Armstrong achieves an effective transformation from this light, otherworldly figure of the opening to the dark, beaten one of the close. But in Act II especially, the production does not always help her to straddle both the satiric and the tragic strands of the work. When Dr Schön returns unexpectedly to find her in the arms of his wife's lover, he is put upon or defeated by the petty-mindedness of the latter, the treachery lurking in every object. As Brecht observed in 1922 when comparing Valentin with Chaplin, a man like this does not make jokes, he is the joke.

The distinction sprang to mind during this programme, pieced together from nine of Valentin's two hundred-odd sketches and presented by the eight players of the Umbrella Theatre under the direction of Colin Granger and David Laveader. (An earlier version was an Edinburgh Festival fringe production in 1975.) Most of the pieces present the audience with a variety of sketches or variety number thwarted by mechanical defects, human incompetence or officious interference. A model covered pilot mauls an ingenious small aeroplane in which he intends to carry out stunt flights in the auditorium; after an alarming bout of engine trouble he is stopped on the brink of take-off by an irate manager, who is not satisfied by his indignant assurance that an accident would kill two or three of the audience "at most". In another sketch, an awful minstrel feels that his midnight serenade has been ruined by a literal-minded lighting technician, who keeps flooding the moonlit stage with lurid primary colours. In a good theatre the safety curtain would have been lowered to save him from such shame, he shouts, and launches vehemently into a technical explanation of how a safety curtain could be installed in the modest space of the Half Moon Theatre.

These and other sketches have the kind of absurd logic which we are now familiar. In this production they are played in a relaxed fashion for the laughs in the script, and Valentin's own roles are shared out among the cast. This obscures the central distinction between the really comic figure and the surrounding stooges, and reduces the evening to a mildly amusing comedy programme, lacking the ferocity and self-righteous indignation with which the author filled his performances.

The problem is also linguistic. Valentin's Bavarian dialect is the ideal medium for his kind of communication, at a time of struggling the almost-inarticulate emotional response, but not so suited to generalized abstraction or discursive lucidity, and these are the areas where he ties himself into virtually untranslatable pseudo-logical knots. The line of thought that seems only too available to Bavarian dialects in English, as he does in standard German, into a quainter, emotionally less charged style.

Some of it, but not enough, survives in the tirade proposing that the scandal of empty rows of seats should be overcome by making theatre-going compulsory by law, like school, a measure which would have moral consequences as beneficial as universal education. The title of this place, *Zwangsveranstaltung*, means primarily "halling order", rather than the punning "compulsory" or "performance", superimposed upon it here; and it points neatly to the obsessive character of much of Valentin's work.

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Behind the safety curtain

By Timothy McFarland

Karl Valentin's Komiker Kabarett
Half Moon Theatre, Whitechapel

The pictures in the foyer convey more of the personality of the great Munich Volksinger Karl Valentin than anything to be seen on the stage. The tall, angular figure with the thin face, spreading nose and huge mouth, a gift to caricaturists and photographers, appears in a mobile assortment of preposterous roles, male and female. All of them are utterly *kleinbürgerlich*, and all display the same desperate seriousness, the same determination not to be put upon or defeated by the petty-mindedness of the latter, the treachery lurking in every object. As Brecht observed in 1922 when comparing Valentin with Chaplin, a man like this does not make jokes, he is the joke.

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The passions of a superfluous man

By Henry Gifford

A Month in the Country
Olivier Theatre

Meyerhold, objecting to Turgenev's stage technique, seized on an expression of Rakitin in the first act of *A Month in the Country*. "Under the lime trees of neglected alleys and in portrait galleries they weave at leisure the face of endless dialogues." The lime trees and the portrait galleries have been swept away in Peter Gill's production, to be replaced by the geometric simplicity of Allison Chitty's contrived, mainly with a vast slatted screen hung above and tilted for indoor scenes. A few pieces of furniture, or a fence with raspberries for Katya to pick, or a bench and some garden accessories, these are the only relics of the early 1840s—these, and the beautifully evocative period clothes. The lace is more prominent than ever, but it has been trimmed in Isiah Berlin's simple translation.

Berlin has explained that he "wanted something neither Victorian nor modern". The quality he admires in Turgenev's writing is naturalness, an "absolutely authentic" use of the spoken language which Turgenev brought into Russian literature. It must be added that Turgenev owes almost everything to Pushkin, and that the incomparable ease of Pushkin's letters to his friends surpasses Turgenev's achievement. There can be no doubt which had the finer intelligence, the quicker response, the more flexibility. But Turgenev was an accurate listener and he worked very carefully upon the speech of his characters. The effect is not only lifelike, it has the "new element" for its time that Meyerhold noted—musicality.

Musicality can be too highly rated. There is no trace of it in Dostoevsky's dialogue, and he among Russian writers of fiction was the born dramatic writer, always pressing towards the "scandal", confrontation or sudden catastrophe. Turgenev has a little of Addison in him, though he can be ravaged, to this play, as Addison was not. His idiom never grasps at the loquaciousness. It preserves a certain composure even under stress: it is even at times a little boring in its lucidity. *A Month in the Country* has long been recognized as pointing towards Chekhov's mature plays. When the Moscow Arts Theatre produced it successfully in 1909, they had behind them the experience of *The Cherry Orchard*, which gave a better insight into Turgenev's procedure. But his "poetry" is not Chekhov's. However delicate the notation, it does not rely on half-developed hints, and has no place for a sub-text.

Berlin's translation is closer to the bone than Constance Garnett's, which he confesses to having found not "Edwardian and stilted" but "disappointingly good". He knows Russian with an intimacy never possible for Garnett, who was neither born to the language nor equipped with the extensive dictionaries of today; and accordingly he allows himself greater freedom. Turgenev is speeded up; the pace of the dialogue is modern and translator and director between them have cut out some unnecessary explanations, and shortened a few episodes for the stage (the full translation will be published later this year by the Hogarth Press). Thus Doctor Shipilsky's take-over bid for the lady's companion (much enjoyed by the audience) loses his ministry of Natalya Petrovna and the little Polish song about the goat. Likewise, his earlier conversation with Rakitin about Bolshintsov's proposal and the bribe of a troll team is much shortened.

There are many felicities in the phrasing, and Berlin copes neatly with the peasant girl Katya's colloquial speech. No attempt is made at reticence: instead Berlin goes for "this body's life", "the heat today! I think I faint rain", and he catches beautifully the gabble of Bolshintsov, the irresolute author. In short, this is a very workable translation, current English with a slight patina of the nineteenth century. It is adapted to the contemporary voice, lighter and more nervous than in Turgenev's time. If a certain speciousness has gone out of our talk, the translator could hardly restore it without patching.

In what threatens to become a nation of antiqued dealers it is pleasing to be spared this. The closeness of the play's situation to Turgenev's own with the singer Pauline Viardot gives it that seriousness which also marks the comedy of Gorkhovsky and Chekhov. The attendance of Rakitin on the capricious young married woman Natalya Petrovna in her country house follows the pattern of Turgenev's own life. As he did not hesitate to tell the actress Savine (whose performance was very good) "Rakitin is myself. Always in my novels I depict myself as an unsuccessful lover."

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Ilya Yefimovich Repin, "Portrait of Morusio in a Garden" (1924), for sale at Sotheby's with other Russian paintings, drawings, watercolours and sculpture on March 5.

which he confesses to having found not "Edwardian and stilted" but "disappointingly good". He knows Russian with an intimacy never possible for Garnett, who was neither born to the language nor equipped with the extensive dictionaries of today; and accordingly he allows himself greater freedom. Turgenev is speeded up; the pace of the dialogue is modern and translator and director between them have cut out some unnecessary explanations, and shortened a few episodes for the stage (the full translation will be published later this year by the Hogarth Press). Thus Doctor Shipilsky's take-over bid for the lady's companion (much enjoyed by the audience) loses his ministry of Natalya Petrovna and the little Polish song about the goat. Likewise, his earlier conversation with Rakitin about Bolshintsov's proposal and the bribe of a troll team is much shortened.

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fluous man" were it not for his ort. Romantic love, Rakitin warns the student, is "a catastrophe if you surrender yourself to it wholly." In the way he has, Belyev must avoid discovering how "those little hands can torture you and with what solicitous tenderness they can rend your heart into little pieces..."

Natalya Petrovna's Infatuation with Belyev spreads devastation through the household. It scatters them all "like partridges", as he bewildered husband puts it. Some of the partridges are wounded. It is possible to see a connection between this play and L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*, also concerned with a house party in summer heat, the ruthless course of a woman's love, and the disastrous consequences for an innocent child. True, Belyev, the ephemeral lover, survives; he faces the future confidently after the sudden flare of Natalya's attraction has died down for him. There is no death to this comedy, but Veronika has her life ruined, perhaps as effectively as Leo's. Natalya, absorbed as ever in her own experience, tells the suffering witness of this new love, Rakitin, "It's as if I'd been poisoned... everything's destroyed, scattered, gone—and he's frightened of me." With reason, she has become a primitive force out of control.

The dramatic impetus of the piece, then, is concentrated in Natalya. Structurally the play is almost naïve. The characters succeed one another on the stage like so many creakers—and the set makes it a long walk to and from the pavilion. So it all depends on the actor. When Turgenev himself saw it performed he was surprised to see what could be made of a minor character like Bolshintsov, nor had he apparently realized the potentialities of Vera.

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Belyev (Ewan Stewart) is pleasantly frank and sturdy, more perhaps a boy from the village—his father does live in the country—than the Moscow student whom Turgenev had originally made more consciously political. Vera (Caroline Langrishe) has to grow from a little girl to a woman in a single day, but achieves a convincing maturity and is broken neither by Natalya Petrovna nor by the disingenuous doctor who sells her prospects of happiness for three horses. Shipilsky (excellently played by Michael Gough) knows how to survive in this world of individuals who cannot attend for very long to others. Nobody spares a thought for the pavilion. So it all depends on the actor. When Turgenev himself saw it performed he was surprised to see what could be made of a minor character like Bolshintsov, nor had he apparently realized the potentialities of Vera.

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Paved with Good Intentions

Male chauvinist bull

By Andrew Hislop

Raging Bull
Various cinemas

"Now, sometimes, at night, when I think back," remarks Jake La Motta in his autobiographical book, *Raging Bull* (1970), "I feel like I'm looking at an old black-and-white movie myself. . . . Not a good movie, either, jerky, with gaps in it, a string of poorly lit sequences, some of them with no beginning and come with no end." His "true story of a champ" has all the ingredients of a classic Hollywood fight movie—a main Italian boy from the Bronx making good, twisting God and the mob. It is not only the understanding of the priest from the reform school who turns up with welcoming arms to watch him win the world middleweight crown, but also the bookie whom La Motta thought he had murdered years before. There are, too, elements in the life of this brutish man, whose periods of impotence and abstinence were followed by bouts of sexual indulgence and violence, which would make a seamy exploitation movie.

Martin Scorsese's film is neither a Hollywood story, nor a celebration of sex and violence, but a work more akin to La Motta's "cinematic" perception of his past. Shot



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in black and white, it is a string of sequences, some without beginning, some with no end, excerpts of fights, stills from them or merely their dates, and episodes from La Motta's life outside the ring (but not from before his fighting career) with the minimum of narrative explanation. His first wife disappears from the screen as soon as he meets Vickie (Cathy Moriarty), the beautiful young girl he was later to marry. Even the fight sequences, which do not form a large proportion of the film, are broken up by slow motion and the sudden contrasting of claustrophobic close-up shots of the ring with a wide-angle view of the ring that gives it an airy, spacious emptiness. Inside and outside the ring, the camera sometimes lingers in fascination on the motion of water on the human body—Vickie's legs in a swimming pool, La Motta dipping his hand in a glass of cold water, his back being rubbed with a blood-soaked sponge.

In La Motta's "film" there is "no musical score, just sometimes the sound of a police siren or a pistol shot". Scorsese's soundtrack, by contrast, a blend of romantic strings, period songs, loud animal grunts (as opposed to the often quiet speech) and amplified blows, provides vital binding to his film's fragmentary form, creating a view of La Motta which ranges from the balletic to the brutal. And unlike La Motta's, Scorsese's is a good film, his best since *Mean Streets*, which also depicts the New York Italian community. Technically brilliant, at times almost controlled in its manufacture, it contains a central performance of terrifying power by Robert De Niro, the rage of "the Bull" matched almost by the "madness" of the method actor, scouring his body into fighting fitness only to blurt it out to play La Motta later life, fat and fallen from grace.

For Scorsese, however, La Motta's life is not without redemption. There is no reform-school priest (or resurrected bookie) in his film, but he ends it with the words of the man in John's Gospel, "Once he was blind, now can he see." He has also spoken of La Motta's showing us that we have metaphorically broken our hands to get out of some of our states of mind, and of his having "to go through his mother's womb again in order to achieve the kind of catharsis" we are shown La Motta literally breaking his hands against the wall of his cell after he has been convicted of allowing under-age prostitutes into his club.

But the redemption of this men, pathological in his jealousy, savage to his women, is not made explicit. All we are given of his life after his release from prison is a scene which opens and closes the film, in which he is rehearsing his performance as a stage monologist. His ratcheting the famous "I could have been a contender" speech from *On the Waterfront* marks the distance of Scorsese's film from La Motta's, rather than any spiritual change in La Motta, who shows most remorse when he denies his aggressive instincts by deliberately losing a fight.

What is made explicit in the film is not La Motta's return to the world but his central, locust-like relationship with his brother and manager, Joey (Joe Pesci). The screenplay by Paul Schrader and Merik Merik transposes to this relationship many details of the real La Motta's stormy, sexually-jealous friendship with Peter Savaga (who with Joe Pesci helped him write his book), in particular his assaulting him in the belief that he had had an affair with Vickie.

In the film, Joey is subservient to his brother. He procures Vickie for him, fights over her when she goes out with a mobster, but also adds to La Motta's sexual insecurity by having a fling with a young girl, little less ending "and there will be . . . less trouble upstairs," he remarks. The brothers stop seeing each other after La Motta's attack on Joey. The given comic, poignant when La Motta rings up Joey but cannot bring himself to speak to him, Joey, in the strident Bronx phallicism which permeates the script, imparts a sexual familiarity with his brother to the mother of the unknown child.

There is a reconciliation with Joey in the film, there was with Savaga in the book. The real Joey is suing the film company.

Simple hindsight

By Peter Clarke

Saint Joan
Aris Theatre, Cambridge

Of all Shaw's plays, *Saint Joan* has probably established the most direct popular appeal. Its success depends to an unusual extent upon how the title role is handled. As that experienced actor, Ronald Reagan, likes to say, the problem is not easy but it is simple. This is the spirit in which Julie Covington tackled it in Nancy Meckler's Cambridge Theatre production. The result is a lively and faithful rendering, with some sense, irony, idealism and laughter all allowed their place.

This is not a truly historical play, but rather an encounter with

Making new

By Craig Brown

The Stalker
Academy Cinema, Oxford Street.

Often in Tarkovsky's new film, the camera follows the back of a character's head as if it is trying to look at itself inside. Whatever he looked at, however ordinary, has a strangeness about it. The opening shot shows a head in a back-room, a splash of water is seen from above, in the manner of those "What-ifs?" children's competitions, and the camera travels on to reveal a recognizable humdrum perspective on the glass and a man in bed, from a side-angle.

The man is the Stalker, a guide to a prohibited area known as the Zone. "What is it?" a famous scientist has asked.

A metaphor, or a visitation from Outer Space? Whatever it was, there appeared in our small land a miracle of miracles: the Zone. We sat in troops. None of them returned. Then we surrounded the Zone with police cordons. We did right . . . although I'm not sure.

The Stalker meets the professor and the writer he is to take on his illicit journey into the Zone, explaining

historical figures impersonating certain forces and ideas which appealed to Shaw. It conveys little understanding of fifteenth-century France but instead speaks to the concerns of the twentieth-century mind. The discussions between the East of Warwick and Catherine, Bishop of Beauvais, depend for their effect on the audience's complicity in the understanding that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are about to happen. In short, this is the little-did-they-know school of history. Thus Warwick, all bland cynicism in David Lyon's accomplished performance, is given to nuzzle on the threat Joan represents to the status quo. He is concerned with the political challenge to persons like himself which the appeal to French sentiment poses, and archly counts this as a "nationalist" expression of his meaning. Couched, played with impressive weight and dignity by John Phillips, is slower to catch on about the spiritual threat from a pious peasant girl whose soul he would like to save. But pretty soon we see him pondering the implications of what the Earl of Warwick calls protestantism.

Characters who step in and out of the present in this way are well served by Patrick Robertson's excellent visualisation. Stark tubular metal urns are wheeled into a versatile series of plans, and always enclosed by a wall of Warwick and Catherine, are of a scaffold and a concentration camp. It allows considerable freedom of movement in developing the action and is used to freeze tableau at the end of each scene in a generally unforced way. This stylization is particularly effective in the dream scene at the end. The ghost of Joan reappears before Charles VII, transformed from his coronation in Rheims Cathedral to her agency. He remains, of course, a lightweight, conveyed in a rather comic, inconsequential way by Kenneth Lomax, who times his lines well for the drama we need here. Joan is a true reformed in her presence by all those who posthumously claim to be her admirers. A dead saint is evidently much less awkward proposition than a living one. This is not a solemn and tragic tale, but it is a poignant one for all that.

that if they manage to reach the Room within it their most profound desire will come true. Almost the whole of this long film follows the three temperamental men on their extraordinary journey towards this goal, a journey made all the more difficult by the volatility of the surroundings—"at each moment it's as if we've made it up by our state of mind", one of them says.

It is so common to need only half an eye and a fraction of the brain when watching a film, that to see the unusual visual and intellectual range of *The Stalker* is initially an effort. The splash of water, each insect crawling along a blade of grass is scrutinized and in a peculiar way re-created, and the farther the trio gets from the everyday world and the closer to the heart of the Zone (a transition marked by a change from black and white to colour) the more complex and diverse become its motives and fears; but there is such conviction in Tarkovsky's slow and relentless searching that very soon the mind finds itself hunting wherever he hunts.

The idea that their desperate desires might soon be realized becomes less attractive to the writer and the professor the closer they come to the Room. Bored with his own world, the writer was always sceptical of intercourse in any

other. His voyage is from scepticism to fear. The quieter, less obstreperous professor fears for different reasons: if any man can have his desires, any tyrant or rogue may eventually dominate and transform the world. So the professor carries with him, hidden away, a bomb to destroy the Room.

The Stalker has made the journey a number of times before, but is not allowed to enter the Room. In the justifying his existence to the two others: he is the source of hope to the wretched, the man who can deliver people to a knowledge that the world as it is generally understood is a slight and rather mindless portion of the world as it is. Anyone with any knowledge of the intricate public emotion which Irish nationalist activists had to work on in order to give an actual popular substance to their political aims must know that the Stalker in this context is quite a latter received from a viewer after the Famine programmes, typical of a number of others: "My father [before the First World War] had an interest in salmon fishing at Taelin, Donegal, and as a result was a successful fisherman. One day, during a severe storm, he was out on the water and he was blown away by a wave. He was never seen again. I have heard many tales of famine from him. Folk memories are long in Ireland and you would have thought from these girls that the famine happened only a short time ago."

The famine (and it was not just a famine) in the early twentieth century any more than the memory of the Great Depression is today) became a most important part of the background to many Irish men and women's resentment against British rule in Ireland. Or what was so unlikely: that nothing can even have a background?

Among this week's contributors

JOHN BAYLEY's books include *The Division: Unity and Disunity in Literature*, 1976.

T. J. BRYSON is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

WILLIAM BOYD's novel *A Good Man in Africa* was published earlier this year.

JAMES CAMPBELL is the editor of the *New Edinburgh Review*.

TERENCE CAYE is the author of *The Corruption Text*, 1979.

PETER CLARKE's books include *Liberalism and Social Democracy*, 1978.

PATRICK CRANLY's critical study, *The Lady's Secret: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction*, a collaboration with Mary Gedge, is reviewed in this week's TLS.

G. R. ELTON's books include *England Under the Tudors*, 1955, and *Reform and Reformation*, 1977.

J. A. FARRINGTON was a winner in the recent South Bank Show and the Observer Poetry Competition.

ARUN FRIEDMAN is writing a biography of the opera singer Maria Malbrain.

PETER FORSTER's *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* will be published later this year.

ANTHONY GARDNER's books include *Lord Ruler of Spengler's Method*, 1976, and *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, 1977.

HENRY GIFFORD's books include *Tolstoy: a Critical Anthology*, 1971, and *Peterburg*, 1977.

ANDREW GRAMHAM is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

GEORGE GRIGG's most recent collection of poems, *The Fleets*, was published last year.

DONALD HALL's most recent collection of poems, *Kicking the Leaves*, was published in 1978.

JEREMY HARRIS is the Vice-Chairman of the Monopolies Commission.

ROBERT HAWESON's *Under Steps*, a study of British literature in the 1940s, was published in 1978. Its sequel, *In Anger*, will be published later this year.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON is Professor of French History at University College, London. His books include *A Concise History of France*, 1970.

P. N. JENNISON-LAKE is Professor of Experimental Psychology at the University of Sussex. He is co-author, with P. C. Wason, of *Thinking*, 1977.

PHILIP LARKIN's most recent collection of poems is *High Windows*, 1974.

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BRIAN MONTGOMERY is the author of *A Field Marshal in the Family*, 1973.

JANET MANGAN is the editor of *Richard Crossman's Diaries*, 1976, and *The Backbench Diaries*, of Richard Crossman which is published next week.

KENNETH O. MORGAN's *Wales 1880-1980* will be published later this year.

PAUL MULDOON's most recent collection of poems, *Why Brownlee Left*, was published last year.

JOHN ROSS is a Senior Lecturer in French and Anglo-Linguistics at the University of Essex.

T. A. SIMPSON's books include *Boswell's Studies in English Literature*, Series, Number 70, 1979.

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R. L. STOREY's books include *Chronology of the Medieval World*, 1973.

GILLIAN WILCOX is on the editorial staff of the *New Statesman*.

CHRISTOPHER WINTLE is a lecturer in Music at Goldsmiths College, London.

DAVID WRIGHT's most recent collection of poems is *Metrical Observations*, 1980.

Irish History

Sir—Roy Foster in his dislike of Irish history seems to have gone round the bend (Commentary, February 13).

He writes: "... recent scholarship suggests that the Famine was inspired as much by contemporary European movements and the Anglo-French tradition of nationalism. . . . As much by? It has been known for years that such influences had some lateral bearing on Fenianism—a cursory reference was actually made to this in the BBC series—but to a television programme about the Irish nationalist conflict such details are distracting footnotes. Dr Foster may well argue that history is too delicate a study to be exposed to the necessary oversimplifications of television. . . . end on an erudite academic level I would agree with him, but then it is history to be allowed to make sense to one or two academics?"

Again: "... the old idea [my belief] of apostolic succession from Tone to Parnell to Pearse. . . . I am sorry, but there was such a succession of extreme Irish nationalists there still is, as Dr Foster could have been reminded if he had bothered to wait for the last BBC programme. Would the title of O'Connell's cooperation with the Whigs, or of Gavan Duffy and the Tenant League—interesting in the past in the development of Irish political nationalism—have been suitable material for disquisition in such programmes? Or is the development of anything in history too linear a concept for Dr Foster?"

And again: "... the idea that [the Famine] inspired later nineteenth-century nationalism, while teleologically attractive, is not borne out by detailed study. . . . Anyone with any knowledge of the intricate public emotion which Irish nationalist activists had to work on in order to give an actual popular substance to their political aims must know that the Stalker in this context is quite a latter received from a viewer after the Famine programmes, typical of a number of others: "My father [before the First World War] had an interest in salmon fishing at Taelin, Donegal, and as a result was a successful fisherman. One day, during a severe storm, he was out on the water and he was blown away by a wave. He was never seen again. I have heard many tales of famine from him. Folk memories are long in Ireland and you would have thought from these girls that the famine happened only a short time ago."

5 Wetherby Gardens, London SW5.

Sir Albert Richardson

Sir—Gavin Stamp in his observations on Simon Houff's *Sir Albert Richardson: The Professor* (January 30) singles out for special praise Richardson's *Monumental Classic Architecture in Great Britain and Ireland*. Your readers may be interested to learn that this programme was used for the first time in the most handsome twentieth-century British publication on architecture, according to your reviewer will be released this year by Classical Architecture and W. W. Norton and Company with the aid of the Arthur Ross Foundation of New York.

HENRY HOPE REED, *Classical America*, Box 821, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10036.

Edward Thomas

Sir—In his stimulating review of Andrew Motion's *The Poetry of Edward Thomas* (January 29), C. H. Sisson repeats the statement that it is the "first full-length study" of Thomas. For the sake of completeness, may I refer you to the book *Edward Thomas's Poetry* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), the second part of which is a full-length study of Thomas's poetry entitled *Edward Thomas (1897-1917): Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Heimat*.

English Department, University of Amsterdam, Spilergat 210, Amsterdam.

to the editor

Reading Henry James

Sir—It was gallant of Frank Kermode to rush to Susanne Kappeler's defence (Letters, February 20). I was chiefly worried by her inability to write clearly; I had privately assumed, until reading the Professor's letter, that this portly sprang from the fact that English was not her first language.

Professor Kermode may have reasons for disagreeing with my review, but what are they? He does not provide an answer to my chief objections: that the book is full of factual errors, that it is obscurely written, and that it only occasionally refers to its subject, Henry James.

Alas, I did not mention *The Gnosis of Sacrepe*, a book by Professor Kermode. Perhaps I should have done? He manages to infer, none the less, that I have got this book wrong in some way and that its argument "is approximately the precise opposite" of the view I attributed to him. Since I did not mention the book, I do not know whether my words were the opposite of his, or whether he was the opposite of mine. I am sorry to hear that the review of the received doctrine. But when Professor of English can write in this way, what hope is there for those of us who belong to the "leisure class of critics"? And when, incidentally, can this phrase mean, if it does not apply as much to the fellows of King's College, Cambridge, as to anyone else?

A. N. WILSON,
15 Richmond Road, Oxford.

Dante

Sir—David Robey in the course of his review of my book *Dante the Maker* (February 13) writes to sum up the theory of poetic inspiration expressed there in the following words: "... its basic propositions being that true poetry depends for its effect on the intensity of the experience from which it derives and that the poet is likely to take the form of his poetry from the unconscious."

This is strange because I ascribe no such function to the unconscious anywhere in the book. On the contrary in at least eleven different contexts I say that inspiration comes from states of higher consciousness. I say, for example, on page 235, "True inspiration comes to the artist in a state of enhanced consciousness." On page 297-8 I write of the effect of states of higher consciousness in fusing together recollections, memories and images into new insights and inspirations; on page 409, after discussing older theories of the unconscious in relation to Dante and creativity, I specifically state that "the most interesting point about the artistic states of higher consciousness is that they are unconscious origins."

WILLIAM ANDERSON,
40 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey.

Jutland and After

Sir—Paul C. Kennedy in his review (January 2) of *The Great Gunnersy Scandal* has revived the ancient controversy as to whether our failure to win decisively at Jutland affected the course of the war and has done so with the challenging comment that it is a nonsense to imagine that it did. In support of this opinion he states categorically that the war could be won only on land, and that in consequence the role of the Navy was "secondary" and "negative"—just a matter of not losing control of sea routes.

The truth is that in 1914, as in 1959, there were two major battle areas—one at sea, one on land. Defeat at sea, in either case, to the point that our supplies were cut off, would have led to immediate unconditional surrender. Defeat on land, on the other hand, as we saw in 1940, would have led merely to a temporary stalemate with the issue of the war still wide open. No question then as to which of the two battles was secondary.

In June 1916, after Jutland, the strategic situation in your reviewer's

opinion remained "unchanged". Yet on October 29 Admiral Jellicoe felt obliged to warn his First Lord, Arthur Balfour, that our losses in merchant ships might by the early summer "force us into accepting peace terms which the military position on the Continent would not justify, and which would fall far short of our desires".

By the end of the year our losses were rising catastrophically. For four months we remained defenceless against the submarines. The Navy on which we depended for survival had failed us. In May, at the eleventh hour, Jellicoe withdrew his objections and adopted convoy. The tables were then turned. The Navy fought back, won their battle against the submarines and while doing so secured a million men from America to help our own hard-pressed armies in France.

Would it not therefore be more true to say that in winning the war the Navy played out a secondary but a dual role, having both to win their own war and give vital aid to the army in theirs?

ANTHONY POLLEN,
Lime Tree House, Upper Strand Street, Sandwich, Kent.

Forrest Reid

Sir—An fine review of Brian Taylor's *The Green Avenue* (February 13) Francis King attempts to adjust the received notion of Forrest Reid's private life by suggesting that Reid did believe in a congress with Kenneth Hamilton. Moreover, he states that: "in the case of at least one other of Reid's youthful friends, there is the probability that sexual intercourse, however furtive and fumbling, also took place." As Mr King says elsewhere, *The Green Avenue* "errs on the side of reticence", and if only for the sake of biographical accuracy (not, after all, an unimportant consideration) any such private matters are of interest. Since, as far as I know, there is no published confirmation of what Mr King alleges, his manner of simply asserting it serves only to cloud the biographical impression with rumour and speculation.

ALAN HOLLINGHURST,
47 Cobden Crescent, Grandport; Oxford.

'The First Moderns'

Sir—I do not know why Dame Frances Yates in her review of Joseph Rykwert's *The First Moderns* should suggest (January 16) that until she published a book in 1969 "it was assumed that there was no evidence of any influence of Renaissance architectural theory in England until the advent of Italian art in the early seventeenth century." Chapter 3 of Sir John Summerson's *Architecture*, in Britain 1530 to 1830 in the great Pelican series, published in 1953, is entitled "Elizabethan Architecture: influences and methods." Sir John discusses there the "substantial influence" of Serlio, of Alberti and of course, of Vitruvius and gives a long list of the books "available to Englishmen at the time", in Latin, Italian and French, as well as "the strapwork" Flemish books. (I quote from Sir John Summerson's book because it is so easy to refer to.)

As for what got built, it was not, as she suggests, "the modern public houses." Sir John, writing about Dr John Calus, describes him "as one of the first of those Renaissance scholars to whom antique architecture was important and who deliberately stimulated its introduction into the buildings of the two university towns" (page 408). Calus had travelled and taught in Padua, and had begun his quadrangle at Gonville Hall in Cambridge in 1565, which includes a thoroughly classical gate of Virtue and the Gate of Honour.

The second half of the sixteenth century was a dry period for church building, but classical monuments and porticoes were being built all right.

ELIZABETH YOUNG,
100 Beyerwater Road, London W2 3HJ.

Eric Ambler

Sir—Eric Ambler's *The Mock of Dimitrios* was published in the United States in 1939 as *A Coffin for Dimitrios*. The "silly" is neither intentional nor fraudulent, but solely the reviewer's (David Lodge, February 20).

ERIC HOMBERGER,
University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ.

'Castle Dangerous'

Sir—Before correcting A. N. Wilson about *Castle Dangerous*, Alan Hinde (Letters, February 13) should have looked at a map. Both in his introduction to the novel, and in the first chapter, Scott, with reference to Douglas Water, the Cairnbarrow hill and the Kirk of St. Bride—made it clear that *Castle Dangerous* was the one at Douglas in Lancashire and not the Mr Hinde supposed *Castle Douglas*, the town in Galloway fifty miles to the south. The letter is indeed, as Mr Hinde says, in the country of Guy Monroving (and of Redgauntlet); *Castle Dangerous* is in the country of Old Mortality.

JANET ADAM SMITH,
57 Lansdowne Road, London W11.

Byron, Shelley and Keats

Sir—The answer to Richard Gordon McClokey's inquiry (Letters, February 6) is in his own country. The verse (not a himerick) is from A Pig's Eye View of Literature by the late Dorothy Parker. It reads:

Byron and Shelley and Keats
were a trio of lyrical traits.
The forehead of Shelley was cluttered with curls,
And Keats never was a descendant
of earle,
But it didn't impair the poetical
feast.

Of Byron and Shelley,
Of Byron and Shelley, and Keats.
OF BYRON AND SHELLEY AND KEATS.
ELIZABETH BURTON,
10 New Year Road, Witney, Oxon OX26 6NZ.

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Simply severe

By G. R. Elton

MICHAEL VAN CLEAVE ALEXANDER: The First of the Tudors A Study of Henry VII and his Reign 280pp. Croom Helm. £12.95. 0 7099 0503 3

Michael Alexander begins rather ominously by telling us that Henry VII has only rarely received "the recognition he deserves". Since just about every modern historian who has looked at that king has expressed marked respect, we might expect a powerful debunking attack, but in fact Alexander's favourable assessment differs hardly at all from standard views. He ends rather embarrassingly with a naive construction of a league table in which Henry VII is judged to stand above the Conqueror, Edward I, and so forth. In between the book does rather better, though not very much: there is much simplicity in it.

This is a straightforward account, mainly derived from other historical studies, of the king's life and work; its most original section makes more than is justified of the age's contribution to learning and the arts. Alexander is good on court pageantry and deals well with diplomatic efforts; on problems of the king's domestic government and policy he does sensible things where his guides illumine his path, but where they falter or get difficult he tends to betray a lack of real understanding. If he felt it necessary to comment on the tax called the Fifteenth and Tenth, the origins of Star Chamber and Requests, the records of the treasurer of the chamber, previous to bills in parliament, and similar tricky technical matters, he should have got them much more neatly right than he does.

Alexander's method lacks sovereignty. Far too many footnotes assemble general accounts of very varying ages which in many cases merely repeat one another, and even then this primitive method of citation quite often offers poor

support for what is said in the text. He litters his account with references to named historians whose heads he tends to count when he has to decide between conflicting views. A passage in which Pope, Audon and Robert Gravelle are called in as consultants, to decide on the quality of Skelton's poetry, reads like self-parody. There is something appealingly medieval about all this, but it hardly constitutes the novel and independent assessment of Henry VII promised in the preface.

On the other hand, Alexander keeps blaming unnamed historians when he thinks he discerns in them an inadequate enthusiasm for his hero, though it is rarely apparent that this line so dorkily hinted at have actually been committed.

These defects allowed for, however, the book has its uses, as a quite respectable, rather gentlemanly account of the reign. If it were not for the claims to originality and weight made in the preface one could leave it there. As it is, the question remains whether it was enough to put together this mass of facts and opinions culled from historians. That Henry VII needs the historian's attention is certainly true: the king, his reign and his purposes retain far too many mysteries. Unfortunately, none of them can be brought nearer clarification from the printed materials available since the state of that evidence is responsible for our present knowledge. Anyone seriously concerned to understand Henry VII and his reign must spend long hours in the Public Record Office in the study of manuscript sources which are massive and difficult and can be repulsive; probably they should not be approached by anyone so ill equipped in the problems of Tudor law and finance as Alexander is.

What virtue inheres in any assessment of Henry's alleged restoration of law and order under the aegis of D. J. Guthrie's demonstration that the seemingly formidable apparatus of repressive laws remained virtually unenforced? How can one preserve notions of the king's dominant activity when J. H. Baker has shown how the whole common law underwent a transformation to which royal or even parliamentary edicts played no part? How can one judge any aspect of

policy without a good look at the politics of the court and its factions, the king's growing savour of manoeuvres, at the daily pressures under which Henry operated? Henry's complex use of his council and of commissions stands at the very heart of his rule and its success, and while it is true that there are problems crying out to be investigated, an account which is not even aware that the problems exist really will not serve.

A great deal, after all, depends on whether we can really identify the king with the actions done in his name, or done often enough without calling in that name: until that question is answered we really have no idea how to judge Henry. Alexander solves the problem by the time-hallowed device of simply taking his initiative and action for granted, and of equating supposed intention with conjectured achievement. If he encounters doubts raised by others he dismisses them by vouching an older account in warranty; thus for Henry's supposed production of statutes he refers himself to H. J. Gray's long exploded study of legislation. But riding head in the air, over these difficulties only means that we remain on the familiar surface and shut our eyes to all the realities.

It must be emphasized that Alexander has put together a respectable individual, even if some parts of the picture are made of cardboard; what cannot be accepted is that he has fulfilled his claim to have presented a person very different from that found in all the textbooks. Typically enough, for instance, he accepts the traditional view of Henry's last years, with their supposed decline into extortionate avarice, and he seems to accept it on the strength of a kind of majority vote rather than because he has investigated the problem for himself. This, of course, is an ancient and well-worn chestnut, but it deserves a word because it indicates the sort of work that needs to be done on this reign if we are ever to gain a better security than is obtained from *stare super vias antiquas*.

Many years ago I pointed out that the present view of Henry's change of policy and character was derived from contemporary accounts demonstrably affected by selection

and self-interest, and I suggested that the king's policy had not so much changed as grown savour of manoeuvres, at the daily pressures under which Henry operated? Henry's complex use of his council and of commissions stands at the very heart of his rule and its success, and while it is true that there are problems crying out to be investigated, an account which is not even aware that the problems exist really will not serve.

Next we learnt, quite correctly, that Henry's policy of taking bonds, especially from the aristocracy, imposed dangers and burdens on a large number of people. I asked whether the investigated circumstances in which these bonds were should not be considered, and whether the evidence that Henry never intended to collect on them should not be taken into account. I asked for an informed understanding of what that bonding policy meant. No real answer has been attempted—least of all by Alexander, who once again laments the fate of the earl of Northumberland, heavily fined for the abduction of a royal ward, without noting that the girl died in the earl's hands. I ask again, how have we for years been justified in the so-called reaction of 1509-12 when it gave way so quickly to a resumption of the earlier policies? Why, in 1536, did the Pilgrims of Grace feel able to look back upon the first Tudor reign with such passionate nostalgia? Why, in 1550, did Hugh Latimer urgently lament the abandonment of one of Henry VII's devices which, according to the chronicles, roused most hatred for his rule—the use of paid informers?

I am not, as Alexander seems to suppose, trying to whitewash the king; I have never had any doubt that he ruled throughout with a heavy hand. But I am concerned that questions fundamental to a real understanding of Henry VII and his reign should be so blithely shoved aside by an author who claims to be illuminating our darkness. The reign of Henry VII still awaits its historian.

His ultimate motive in founding Eton and King's College was selfish concern for his spiritual welfare after death. His statutes required the dismissal of scholars if the revenues dwindled, leaving the chaplains to celebrate masses. This was not a unique provision. Henry's commissioners who drafted the statutes modelled them on Wykeham's; he had made their provision for New College, as did Henry's contemporaries, the founders of All Souls and Magdalen Colleges, Oxford.

Wolffe observes that there is less clear evidence of Henry's involvement in domestic than in foreign policies. His extensive understanding of bureaucratic procedures and archives, however, enables him to illustrate the administrative chaos caused by Henry's profuse acquiescence to suits for crown patronage. Courtiers fared best: "no poor or king was never seen, nor richer traitors ever been".

After the loss of Normandy and popular insurrections in 1450, Dr Wolffe discerns signs of firmer control in England's government. It is surely mistaken to praise Henry for this change. He had led six leading ministers in 1450, four by murder, and the younger councillors who took their places must deserve some credit. Moreover, the drift to anarchy had already begun with the outbreak of formidable baronial feuds.

Henry emerged from eighteen months of capture at the end of 1454. He was then only thirty-four years of age, his physical health still robust. According to Dr Wolffe, however, there is no proof that Henry had fully recovered, nor that he thereafter took an active role in public affairs. Ambitious or harmless, he figured as a puppet or a figurehead until his murder in 1471. "Holy King Henry" was soon credited with miraculous cures and rescues, but Tudor suits for his canonization foundered on the uninspiring record of his reign.

Even Henry's piety is questioned.

At the Memorial Service (After Thomas Hardy)

The treasured poems and thoughts in prose, The favourite music, too, By turns voiced out, strung over, those That brought him happiness.

The self—oh yes—assembled too; Kindness and skill and wit In friendly hush recalled anew— Nor lost one charm of it.

Ah yes, Our man is gone away, In proof whereof he leaves no trace. A perfect stranger here today Already takes his place.

John Bayley

with the gradual transfer of power to the young king, seemingly completed in 1457, it effectively ended with his breakdown in 1453. This central period in his reign is of crucial importance in assessing Henry's claim to be king, in seeking some clues to his personality.

Examination of diplomatic correspondence, French as well as English, has persuaded Wolffe that decisive with calamitous results were made by Henry alone, secretly deceiving his council. He let the wily Charles VII ensure him into marriage with Margaret of Anjou and a commitment to support Charles' justification to end the truce so dearly bought and thus expel the ill-provided English garrisons from France.

For these disasters parliament blamed Henry's advisers. If there was then a convention that "the king can do no wrong", as Wolffe

With dispassionate scholarship, Bertram Wolffe provides a more sophisticated assessment. As a work of art, his book deserves high praise for its well-proportioned structure and unpretentious clarity of exposition. Many chapters, skilfully deployed to mark evocative pleasure as well as admiration. Numerous illustrations enrich the text, although one must regret the reduced scale of manuscript in black and white.

This is not a history of Henry's reign, although its major events in which he was concerned are fully considered. Dr Wolffe's perspective is wider in his useful survey of Henry's minority. Here his purpose is to show that the government of Henry's two kingdoms was soundly conducted by his uncles and other councillors; they faithfully strove to preserve his inheritance. The loss of both crowns and thrones he attributed to Henry's own incompetence during the period of personal rule. This second phase began

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The ciceronian ideal

By Terence Cave

MARC FUMAROLI:
L'Âge de l'éloquence
Rétorique et "res litteraria" de la
Renaissance au seuil de l'époque
classique
882pp. Geneva: Droz/Paris: Cham-
pagnon

At first glance, one might be forgiven for taking Marc Fumaroli's remark "Il vaut la peine quelques fois d'oublier momentanément les arbres pour voir enfin la forêt" with a touch of irony. With its 700-odd pages of text, its 130 pages of bibliography, its eighteen-page history of rhetorical theory, its section of annotated illustrations for good measure, *L'Âge de l'éloquence* has the awesome proportions of those doctoral dissertations in which all too often, nothing much is visible but the trees. But the irony would on this occasion be misplaced. By means of a tour de force of organization, the author has ensured that the vast store of erudition on which he has drawn is properly subordinated to a powerful central thesis.

In an intelligent and lucid introduction, Fumaroli first places his work in context by sketching a history of rhetorical theory from the Jesuit Possevin's *Bibliotheca selecta* (1593) to the present day. As I pointed out in a recent review in these columns, René Bray, in his *Formation de la doctrine classique* (1927), said the rhetorical side of the humanist movement was more important to a study of classical doctrine than the tables have now been decisively turned, and *L'Âge de l'éloquence* demonstrates overwhelmingly—if demonstration is still needed—that a historical understanding of the major literary achievements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is impossible without a detailed knowledge of contemporary debates about the status, aims, and procedures of rhetoric.

It is in this sense, indeed, that the remark about the trees and the forest is intended: in the second part of the introduction, Fumaroli cogently argues that it is wrong to project on to the classical period in France our own assumptions about literature as an autonomous and consecrated domain of culture. Even in the age of Corneille and Racine, and still more in the age of Erasmus and Montaigne, the "republic of letters" embraced virtually every form of discursive writing, neo-Latin and vernacular, sacred and profane, deliberative and imaginative. What we now think of as the great literary masterpieces of the period only fit a modest place in this much wider domain: they were individual trees—though fine specimens, in doubt—in a vast forest. Fumaroli does mention Ronard, Montaigne, Corneille, and the rest from time to time, and says interesting things about them, but he quite deliberately refuses to treat them as the *raison d'être* of his enterprise.

His thesis, put at its broadest, is that French classicism represents the triumph of a form of clear-headedness after the University of Paris up to 1643; it then proceeds

"c'est autour d'une version française de l'impartialité ciceronienne que la cour de France au XVII^e siècle réussit à imposer à l'Europe l'autorité d'un style classique". The first part of the elegant tripartite structure of the book is devoted to a history of the ciceronian debate, and is designed to show that what has often been seen as a spasmodic, patchwork assemblage is in fact the medium for a prolonged and probing exploration of key issues concerning the nature of human discourse. Questions such as the proper relation between wisdom and eloquence, the status of rhetorical ornamentation, the ecclesiastical, civic, and courtly functions of eloquence, the relation of the writer to his models and sources—these questions, which had already become commonplace by the sixteenth century and which reflect ancient debates and the value of rhetoric and poetry, are shown to recur in ever-shifting contexts and to be answered in many different and fruitful ways.

Part One, then, is a history of the ciceronian ideal of eloquence: Fumaroli is not concerned with the technical details of rhetorical pedagogy (although different stylistic possibilities are characterized) but with the history of an idea, of the institutions which promoted it, and of the individuals who gave it expression. What emerges in this seventeenth-century history is a picture of the humanist ideal of eloquence, one of the major themes of this, the longest section of the book, is the establishment of a "rhetorique des citations", a form of chaotic, anti-aesthetic eloquence incarnating the humanist reverence for antique sources which is typical of the neoclassical period.

Readers of French Renaissance literature will immediately recognize the importance of the topic: quotation, whether direct or digested, is one of the most central procedures of prose and poetry alike in this period. There are some excellent pages in *L'Âge de l'éloquence* on the way in which, in the later sixteenth century, the quotation gradually lost its status as a revered citation of authority glossed by a humble commentator; in the hands of Du Val and above all Montaigne, it is absorbed into the unified discourse of an author whose own utterances claimed priority, if not superiority. Antoine Compagnon's recent study in the theory and history of quotation, *La Seconde Main*, has some interesting things to say on this question, although from a somewhat different point of view.

The great period of the Parliament continued into the seventeenth century. But with the increasingly acute antagonism between robe and épée and the subsequent decline of the prestige of the Parliament under Richelieu, the

ideal of eloquence fostered by the advocates eventually passes, in Fumaroli's account, to Port-Royal—the transition being symbolized by the encounter between the orator Antoine Le Maître and Saint-Cyr.

The three strands of Fumaroli's book thus converge at a key moment in the history of French culture. A series of mediations is sought, under the aegis of Richelieu's policy of firm central control, between the luxurious tastes of the court and the austerity of the magistrature, between the boyaque manner of the Jesuits and the "rhetorique des citations" between the styles of Rome and of France, between *initiatum* and *imitatio* ciceroniana, and above all between neo-Latin humanism and vernacular *belles-lettres*.

Fumaroli argues that the foundation of French "attic" classicism is a national ideal and a form of eloquence constitutes an extrajudicially successful solution to the problems debated over the previous hundred and fifty years; and that in consequence, despite the dramatic shift from what can be briefly summed up as the Erasmus rhetoric of copia to a simpler, more concise, and less colourful style, the continuity from the Renaissance to the classical period remains unbroken. At the end of a masterly conclusion, Fumaroli leaves us with the figure of Guizot de Balzac, representing the achievement of the humanist ideal of eloquence in the literary, sacred and secular, and the elegance of the court.

A wealth of historical information about institutions and individuals, based on materials which are in many instances little known, fills in the broad outlines of this thesis; not the least useful function of *L'Âge de l'éloquence* will be to serve as a copious work of reference. Some important topics are, inevitably, omitted. "Literature" recedes into the background for strategic reasons; so also does the history of poetics.

This latter decision is a little harder to justify: if the significance of the fusion of the ciceronian and the virgilian models can be emphasized, why not also its contribution to the revival of Aristotle's *ars poetica*? and why, from another point of view, should Vidé's *ars poetica* be admired by Scaliger and Boileau—be neglected since it too incarnates the "ciceronian" cult of Virgil? One might also question the virtual exclusion of the Reformation as a force in the history of rhetoric: the Calvinist aesthetic and the flood of writings on it are perhaps not as important as the *stilus curie* Parliament in determining the range of rhetorical options available towards the end of the sixteenth century, and Peter Bayley's

recent *French Pulpit Oratory 1550-1650* stresses the contribution of the Protestants to sacred eloquence in the seventeenth century.

A difficulty of a different kind arises from the very nature of Fumaroli's undertaking. He shows enormous skill in attaching the least pertinent categories ("ciceronianism", "the sublime", the alliance of wisdom and eloquence) to verifiable historical evidence, and thus in giving them a local precision that also refrains from suggesting that his largely external history of eloquence and its institutions is a sufficient cause of French classicism; he would only claim that these are among the conditions which made such a solution possible.

But one might perhaps question the very notion of a "solution". By stressing the conscious intentions of great men shaping the destiny of the nation and its culture, it conceals all the unconscious forces and all the accidents which contribute to the shaping of myths and literatures. The very problem of rhetoric as formulated and debated by all of Fumaroli's dramatic personae, like after all in its protean and inescapably devious character. To submit its history to what is in the end—no less than Bray's—a teleological account is to accept at face value the very myth which classicism attempts to construct for itself: is this instance, the "age of eloquence" or a rediscovered Golden Age.

Yet some such complicity is no doubt only the price one pays for the qualities of coherence and lucid organization which make this such a distinguished book. Moreover, Fumaroli is not unaware of the problem: he speaks at one point of "le domaine louchant de la rhétorique, où l'on est toujours la sophiste de quelqu'un", and he himself evokes the image of Proteus, if only as a figure of misdeeds.

The institution of French classicism is no doubt a masterpiece of human ingenuity in the face of a perennial and intractable problem; but it would perhaps not be pushing portmanteau too far to discern, in its serenely magisterial pose, the same kind of self-deception and self-deception which is the most brilliant and powerful of the disguises of Proteus himself.

L'Âge de l'éloquence is an outstanding successor to the same theses of Bremont and Delany and to the more recent work of Roger Zuber and Jean Jabbes. For many years to come, it will no doubt be a work of reference for those who are concerned with the Renaissance and the history of French literature and thought, and it should be compulsory reading for anyone who has got into the habit of thinking of the masterpieces of seventeenth-century French literature as a select grove of well-pruned trees.

The Chaucerian reality

By T. A. Shippey

LOTARIO DEI SEGNi (Pope Innocent Third)
De Miseria Condicionis Humane
Edited by Robert E. Lewis
303pp. Scolar Press. £17.50.
0 85367 601 3

NICHOLAS OF LYNN:
Kalendarium
Edited by Sigmund Elanor, translated by Gary McColl and Sigmund Elanor
248pp. Scolar Press. £17.50.
0 85367 602 1

One of the gaps of which medievalists have grown increasingly conscious over the years is the gap between the attitudes of modern editors and of medieval scribes. The former try to find the best manuscript and to emend them where necessary to recover the authors' original intentions; they are to a sense embittered by the later, however, were often much more dynamic in their activities, searching through texts for things they could use, and adding, subtracting or conflating accordingly; traces of this kind of behaviour, interesting as it is, are usually expunged before one gets to the clean printed text of the critical edition.

The producers of the Chaucer Library have decided to reverse this trend and aim at a faithful reproduction of Chaucer's books, errors, glosses and all. Only in this way, they argue, can one see what Chaucer really wrote, and of him (and one might add, with what difficulties he had to contend).

The *De Miseria Condicionis Humane*, by Lotario dei Segni, later Pope Innocent III, edited here by Robert E. Lewis, provides an ideal case for such treatment. Existing in nearly 700 manuscripts, it is nevertheless as popular as a compilation of contemporary *mundi* cliché that scribbles felt free to vary its title, its words, its chapter divisions and even its chapters. Chaucer himself seems to have treated it with similar familiarity. He says in the second version of the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, that he translated it, but it seems doubtful whether he did, and he may have misunderstood even the title, turning *De Miseria Condicionis Humane* into "of the Wretched and miserable condition of man". Did Chaucer think condicio meant "conceptual, pre-creation"? Had he at that point only read the first few chapters, which are indeed about the miseries of birth? These and other questions are well considered by Professor Lewis. In an introduction which casts much light both on the way that Chaucer worked and on the strange attractiveness of misanthropy. It may be added that the translation of *De Miseria*, with its vivid pictures of the vanity of human wishes and the world as a horrid mixture of blood, toothache and earwax, opens up a whole world of

medieval scholarship which most modern scholars would rather forget; while the preponderant work on Chaucer is long way towards a critical edition, even though that is calorifically not provided.

In the case of Nicholas of Lynn's *Kalendarium*, edited by Sigmund Elanor, things are different. These are only fifteen manuscripts of the work; they vary little; and no single work can be connected with Chaucer, though Chaucer certainly used the *Kalendarium*, and it was written in 1386 for John of Gaunt. A critical edition accordingly is provided here though the text printed is certainly closer to Chaucer's. It shows the appalling complexity of medieval science, with a farrago of names, ascendants and unusual hours mixed in with the observations of the sun and eclipses, as well as some of the most beautiful of Nicholas's main original observations. The "shadow-scale" which enables one to tell the clock-time for every daylight hour of the year, Chaucer's clear can use such material correctly; elsewhere, however, only some of which can be explained as either alliteration or ironic devices. Having said this, the *Kalendarium* in front of me makes it impossible to blame his creating indeed a conscious masterpiece of the sheer labour needed to master the astrological and astrological. Like the edition of *De Miseria*, this book must be useful to many besides Chaucerians: it gives a clear picture of one aspect of medieval thought, interpreted only enough to make it readily available.

The bounds of possibility

By Avishai Margalit

ISAAC LEVI:
The Enterprise of Knowledge
462pp. MIT Press. £19.25.
0 262 120 828

After gambling successfully with truth, Isaac Levi has invested all the dividends in the enterprise of knowledge. The outcome is an impressive epistemological system.

Professor Levi is a pragmatist. This means, among other things, that he takes the metaphorical thrust of his two books, *Climbing With Truth* and *The Enterprise of Knowledge*, quite literally. The pursuit of knowledge, for Levi, is less like contemplating eternal ideas and more like running a business efficiently in face of the many uncertainties involved.

He tries not to be faddish. The present philosophical vogue, he believes, is for tracing the sources of knowledge. His resort is that there are no immediate preconceptions. The problem is not pedigree but progress: how to improve knowledge is the question. In any case this is his question. Another philosophical fashion that he objects to is that of the person who holds them, that is, that the standard for the seriousness of a hypothesis

worlds but rather the mundane theory of probability. "Thou shalt commit statistics" is Levi's commandment, directed, of all people, to philosophers.

The *Enterprise of Knowledge* has eighteen chapters, but the epistemological picture is depicted in the first three of these, which are also the most accessible chapters. In them is portrayed the way background knowledge is supposed to guide our quest for more and better knowledge. Levi's leading idea serves as a standard for determining what are serious possibilities, namely those possibilities which are to be reckoned with in one's deliberations. Thus, while it is logically possible that a flipped coin may land up landing on Alpha Centauri, it is not a serious possibility because it is not a serious possibility which is the assumptions which constitute our body of knowledge. Levi does not explicate the notion of serious possibility, but he seems to take it very seriously indeed. So much so that he seriously considers the possibility of a non-serious possibility, which is nevertheless logically possible. In this he differs from his rivals, especially the Carnapians, for whom a non-serious possibility is one which deserves a positive, though negligible, probability assignment.

Settled assumptions are settled, that is, they are the standard for the seriousness of a hypothesis. Levi's book happily expands to include the theory of probability, and in the second part (Chapters Four to Ten) Levi presents an ambitious theory which is meant to be a more comprehensive alternative to the Bayesian one. It is saved from being pretentious by the very high ratio of original argument to page.

The imagination of animation

By Galen Strawson

ADAM MORTON:
Frames of Mind: Constraints on the Common-sense Conception of the Mental
174pp. Oxford University Press: Clarendon Press. £8.50.
0 19 824607 2

Adam Morton's avowed aim, in *Frames of Mind*, is to discern certain "constraints on the common-sense conception of the mental". But he is not concerned explicitly with directly to differentiate the common-sense conception of the mental from the philosophical conception of the mental, whether logical behaviourist, functionalist, dualist, or whatever. Instead he is principally concerned to give a philosophical account of what he takes to be the common-sense view of the mind considered in one particular respect: as that which lies behind and "animates" action.

Professor Morton is therefore occupied throughout with this topic of action. He first discusses the nature of psychological explanation of action; then undertakes an ambitious but, in my view, not very successful description of our capacity to imagine action (when, for example, planning in advance how to perform some action, possibly an action of a kind one has not previously attempted; or picturing what it is like to be someone else, given how they act); then, in the concluding chapters, he describes the "adumbration" of action-patterns in psychophysical imagination; and the "phenomenology of reasoning and anticipation".

There follow two chapters on the "intelligibility of belief" and "intelligibility of desire", in which Morton takes place mainly within the frame of the standard view, which he observes and believes to be the two principal alternatives to which the mental determinants of actions may be divided. Finally, in a chapter entitled "Chaos", he considers how explanations of action in terms of beliefs and desires (where desires are taken to include pro-attitudes in general) may be complicated by the use of the further notions of mood, attitudes and character.

Morton proposes, then, a new taxonomy of action: a familiar terrain, these theorists of action—they are many who operate with the simple, standard view of action, that man's actions are determined by his attitudes, which holds that one can trace no serious distortion and a great deal of clarity into the subject of action. It does take all actions to be taken, some combination of belief and desire, may turn to this book in the hope that it will provide not only a new general view of

their commonsense presuppositions, but also a useful corrective, any tendency to overestimate the (none the less real) merits of the simple standard view of action.

But they will be disappointed on both counts. There are, it is true, many singly intriguing suggestions, and moments of great delicacy in the philosophical analysis; there is, for example, a useful and, in places, a questionable description of the sustained activity of playing a sonata, in the context of which the point is made that there are significant differences between sustained activities and cases of momentary actions and reactions. But Morton's account of action, such as flicking switches and shooting to kill. But as a whole the book is deeply confusing, and unhelpful; although it purports to form a unity, it simply fails to develop any sustained, consistent thesis.

At several points Morton begins to elaborate a highly abstract structure, account of our commonsense conception of the mental, but no consistent terminological framework is ever either fully established and explained, or adhered to, even in an unfinished state. Nor are analogies properly worked through; and the reader is obliged to shift, in locating himself, from one abstract metaphor to another.

A central claim is that, as a body, our principles of psychological explanation are more like a "scheme" than a (scientific) theory. (An example of a scheme is the distinctive feature matrix of phonologists.) We are told that "the two great points of contrast between schemes and theories are in how they change and how they refer to their subject-matter"; and that a scheme evolves like a language (i.e. presumably, with gradual shifts and refinements), not like a scientific theory of some phenomenon, which may change abruptly in postulating the existence of some completely new kind of fundamental entity. Clearly, there is a distinction here; but Morton simply fails to make it clear. Indeed he calls his explanation of this putatively central distinction a "grand abstract puzzlement" and notes that "it is, of course, 'slips away'". If one is not careful.

Apart from general objections, Morton's argument seems questionable on a great many points of substance; although there and again he slides by vagueness a point where a definite decision seems crucial—as, for example, when he considers the "aptness" of explanations without specifying the nature of the relation of aptness to truth. One considerable cause of theoretical uncertainty lies in the uncritical use of material (loosely theoretically diverse) derived from cognitive psychology. The work of Daniel Dennett, among others, has given us reason to expect much greater care and

moreover they constitute the evidence by which hypotheses are evaluated. Settled assumptions cannot be doubted by the person who holds them: only relative to one's settled assumptions can one be in doubt.

Does Levi preach dogmatism, then? No. Certainty is no dogmatism. Dogmatism is a belief in the permanent certainty of what one believes. You can believe with certainty that something is true, without believing that it will always be held by you as true. Levi wants us to subscribe to two seemingly incompatible doctrines: infallibilism and corrigibilism. However, when understood the way he wants them understood, these are in fact compatible: infallibilism is the thesis that what one takes to be cannot possibly be false from one's own point of view at that time. Corrigibilism is the doctrine that what one takes to be known by oneself at a certain time can later be revised. Now both doctrines are, according to Levi, required for rational inquiry. But if one cannot doubt what is in one's body of knowledge, how can one revise it?

Revision of knowledge, like playing the accordion, is accomplished by expansion and contraction; these are the two dominant ways of revision. Through which the topic of revision through replacement of one theory by another is reduced by Levi to these two modes: "first the established theory is 'flattened out' from the body of know-

ledge, then the new theory is added to it. Expansion of knowledge needs little explanation. Contraction, though, needs a lot—especially contraction for the sake of expansion, which is Levi's way of dealing with the replacement of one theory by another.

Levi's body of knowledge is like the pupil of the eye: the more light you shed on it, the more it contracts. His account of contraction is thus unsettling. Suppose you have a theory A in your body of knowledge, and then you encounter theory B which contradicts A. You ought to render B non-serious. Yet, B might look good to you, even promising; you realize that were it true, it would be of considerable explanatory power. What are you to do? Levi suggests the following: first discharge A from your body of knowledge, and then you are free to treat B seriously. But following his advice in such a case means that you are not to make Levi's idea of "serious possibility" seriously, since it tells you to ignore the fact that B is not serious relative to your standard of seriousness (namely, it is contradictory to A which is part of your body of knowledge). It turns out that what ultimately determines what is for a serious possibility is not your current body of knowledge, but rather whether a hypothesis you encounter or discover "looks good": in other words, when you see something good, forget your past theories which stand in its way. This is perhaps good advice, but bad news for the theory of serious possibilities.

Levi's book happily expands to include the theory of probability, and in the second part (Chapters Four to Ten) Levi presents an ambitious theory which is meant to be a more comprehensive alternative to the Bayesian one. It is saved from being pretentious by the very high ratio of original argument to page.

Bayesianism is the view that a

rational person's beliefs are representable by a unique and coherent probability function, a coherent function being one which satisfies the classical axioms of probability theory. Bayesianism requires that a rational person commit himself to change his degree of belief in a conjecture only as a result of a change in the evidence, subject to Bayes's Theorem. (This theorem concerns the probability of a hypothesis when relevant evidence is adduced, given the prior probability of the hypothesis and the likelihood of the evidence itself in the light of the hypothesis.) Levi forcefully rejects the requirement of a unique probability function. According to him one can hold more than one probability function. One's functions may diverge in the number they assign to a hypothesis on some given evidence. This does not make the inquirer irrational, as long as he is willing to postpone judgment when the numbers diverge, and wait for more evidence.

The last part of the book is, to my mind, the best. It deals with so-called inductive inferences (from sample to population), the type of inference which concerns statisticians most as they usually have information on a sample of the population rather than on the population as a whole. Levi also deals with direct inferences (from population to samples) and objects in general to current arguments in favour of reducing the former to the latter.

This is a very rich book, both in its constructive part and in its criticism of alternatives. It is hard to do justice to such richness, to praise the book convincingly, in a limited space. Yet praise it certainly deserves. The MIT press deserves praise, too, for its new printing format, which is very pleasing, as well as very helpful to the reader in leaving wide margins which can be used for annotation. I am sure that Levi's readers will make good use of them.

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